(b) Closed User Group (CUG) networks are strictly meant for internal usage of an organization. Interconnection of CUG network with Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) will result in bypass of Long Distance/International Long Distance Traffic and thus causing revenue loss to both Government as well as Telecom. Service Providers and uneven level playing field.

Amendment in Indian Postal act

2234. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to introduce any amendments in the Indian Postal Act;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether Government propose to privatise the communication sector by introducing international courier services;

(d) whether Government are experiencing any inefficiency in the existing postal sector whether Government think that any changes required such privatisation to improve the efficiency;

(e) whether it is a fact that the entrance of the international courier agencies adversely affects the internal security of the country; and

(f) the number of post offices proposed to be opened and upgraded in Kerala during the coming year?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SANJAY PASWAN): (a) to (d) Indian post Office (Amendment) Bill, 2002 has been introduced in the Lok Sabha on 17.5.02 further to amend the Indian Post Office Act, 1898 in order to bring the provisions of IPO Act 1898 uptodate, in consonance with development in Information Technology and in field of communication and enable the Department of Posts to provide modern services products to meet the expectations of the customers. The Bill has been introduced not as a

result any perceived inefficiency in the existing postal sector and it provides for registration of private couriers only. The Bill has since been referred to the Standing Committee of Parliament Information Technology.

(e) The Department of Posts is not aware of any such problem.

(f) Opening and upgradation of post offices in Kerala Circle is subject to fulfilment prescribed norms and availability of resources.

Withdrawal of STD facility

†2235. PROF. RAM DEO BHANDARY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether STD facility was given to the Members of the Telephone Advisory Committee;

(b) whether this facility has not been withdrawn;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) by when the said facility would be restored after reconsideration by Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) to (d) No, Sir. STD is not provided on Telephone Advisory Committee (TAC) telephones. However, in some individual cases STD facility was provided on specific request. The matter has already been examined and it has been decided not to provide this facility on TAC telephones.

Merger of MTNL and BSNL

2236. SHRI P.K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 916 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 28th November, 2002 and state:

(a) whether the process of identifying the consultant who can advise DoT on the modalities of the merger has already been started

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.